# GAY AND LESBIAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION (GALHA)

*PROMOTING RATIONAL CARING HUMANIST VALUES AND GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS*

# WHAT DO CHRISTIANS SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

**Though many urge a compassionate approach in line with the precept 'love the sinner, hate the sin', the following hostile statements about homosexuality are typical and bear out the assertion in the LONDON CHARTER FOR GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS that "homophobia remains a characteristic of much of the past and present teaching" of Christianity.**

"Jesus taught that the only right use of sex was in marriage ... I do not and cannot deny that homosexual acts are condemned in the biblical and Christian tradition. It is our duty to teach the Christian ideal to our children and not confuse them with options."
**Dr. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury (speech to General Synod, 1987)**

"When civil legislation is introduced to protect behaviour to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when irrational and violent reactions increase."
**Vatican document on *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986**

"Both male and female homosexual behaviour, prompted and accepted as an alternative lifestyle, presents a serious threat to the integrity, quality and solidarity of society as a whole."
**Salvation Army**

"By its very nature homosexuality corrupts all around it. It defiles, it degrades, it contaminates, it ruins innocent lives."
**Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland**

"Where homosexuals co-habit it would be wrong to engage in genital activities."
**Church of Scotland report**

Such views of homosexual behaviour as something *unnatural* and *sinful* are derived from the explicit condemnations found in both Old and New Testaments of the Bible in which Christ himself, whilst not referring specifically to homosexuality, makes his own strict views on sexual matters very plain. In the Sermon on the Mount, he declares: "If a man look on a woman with a lustful eye, he has already committed adultery in his heart. If your right eye lead you astray, tear it out and fling it away; it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of it be thrown into hell." (New English Bible version). It is clear that Christ, like his fellow Jews, was hostile to all but a rigorously controlled sexuality.

# WHAT DO HUMANISTS SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

**Because Humanists do not believe in a God-given code of behaviour and because a key principle of Humanism is freedom of choice, provided no harm is done to others, their attitude to sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular is very different to that of most Christians as the following statements show:**

"Humanists have contributed to the movement in favour of more liberal ideas about sex, including the recognition of the rights of homosexuals and lesbians – not merely their rights, but how they should be respected as others are."
**Lord Fenner Brockway (speech to British Humanist Association Conference)**

"We (Humanists) are able to grant to homosexuals the same rights and freedoms as heterosexuals, and we can welcome to our fellowship persons of different sexual preferences – we reject the biblical attitudes towards homosexuality as being the product of the thinking of a small group of peoples who inhabited a corner of the Mediterranean world some two or three thousand years ago."
**Professor Gerald Larue, author of *Sex and the Bible***

"The British Humanist Association will always seek to answer those who use morality as an excuse for discrimination. It is intolerance and fear that are immoral, not the desire for a more diverse, open and free society."
**Martin Horwood, BHA Director of Development (Writing in support of the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign, 1987)**

"We consider any activities expressing affection between consenting and responsible people, which are normally harmless both to themselves and to third parties, to be both natural and moral. Any suggestion that all members of a particular group are somehow guilty of 'immorality' concerning the spread of AIDS simply because they are members of such a group, should be rejected.
**John Leeson (writing in *Humanist News* 1987)**"

For Humanists it is the quality of the relationship that matters, not the sexual orientation of the partners involved. As the British Humanist Association's educational booklet on Humanism puts it: "Love, security, happiness are the important things. If two people of the same sex, behave towards one another in a loving and considerate way, and if their relationship brings them security, joy and contentment, then Humanists would wish them well."

# WHAT IS HUMANISM?

**Here is a brief outline:**

**Humanism** is a view of life which has its roots in the teachings of ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers like Epicurus and Confucius who lived hundreds of years before Christ.

It is based on the belief that human problems can be solved only by human beings themselves and not by reliance on some supposed supernatural force. Since **Humanists** are agnostic or atheist, they believe in the scientific explanation for human existence, namely evolution.

**Humanists** believe that human beings have to face their problems with their own moral and intellectual resources, using the accumulated knowledge and experience of humankind.

**Humanist** morality is based on concern for human dignity and welfare, the ultimate aim being human happiness and fulfilment. Humanists see moral values not as edicts from a god, but as the principles upon which good human relationships depend. Such principles include being truthful and honest, accepting responsibility, co-operation for the common good and caring for others. These basic human values lie at the heart of societies however much they may be ignored in practice. They are the conditions for social evolution. **Humanists** try to follow The Golden Rule 'Do as you would be done by' as expressed by great philosophers from well before the time of Christ.

Of particular relevance to lesbians and gays, is the **Humanist** belief in The Open Society in which all are free to live their lives without interference, provided they do no harm to others or to the environment. Laws should protect society from exploitation, but must not restrict individuals from taking their own decisions about their private lives.

**Humanism** does not deny the possibilities of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of all realities is by means of free, rational enquiry. Religions and ideologies are not replacements for the need to take responsibility for our actions as human beings.

**Humanists** have a long record of working for social reforms and today their concerns include human rights, world poverty, the environment, women's rights, lesbian and gay rights and animal rights.

"More and more people are becoming unable to accept traditional beliefs. If they think that, apart from these beliefs, there is no need for kindly behaviour, the results may be needlessly unfortunate. That is why it is important to show that no supernatural reasons are needed to make people kind and to prove that only through kindness can the human race achieve happiness."
**Bertrand Russell, philosopher, social reformer, Nobel Prize winner, Humanist.**

# WHAT IS THE GAY AND LESBIAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION?

▼ **GALHA** was founded in 1979 and is a national/international organisation with members in many parts of the UK and abroad. It is affiliated to the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) which is based in The Netherlands, has consultative status with the UN, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, and a membership of some three million.

▼ **GALHA** provides a fellowship and voice for the many agnostics and atheists in the gay and lesbian community and aims to promote an awareness and understanding of the Humanist outlook in that community, as well as bringing gay and lesbian rights issues to the attention of its kindred Humanist organisations. It also plays a part in the ongoing campaign to combat prejudice and discrimination and achieve legal equality for lesbians and gay men in the UK.

▼ **GALHA** has close links with other organisations in the British Humanist movement, including the British Humanist Association (BHA) and the National Secular Society (NSS) which have consistently backed homosexual law reform and are in favour of an equal age of consent. It also has the support of well known Humanists like George Melly, Claire Rayner and Sir Angus Wilson who are on its panel of Vice-Presidents.

▼ **GALHA's** wide range of activities include regular meetings with speakers and discussions, socials, weekend events, co-sponsorship of events like the Lesbian and Gay Groups' Winter Fair, fund-raising for AIDS help organisations, participation in demonstrations and the annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival, speaking out for gay and lesbian rights in the media, making submissions on gay and lesbian rights issues to government bodies, providing speakers for other organisations and Humanist (non-religious) ceremonies for its members and the gay and lesbian community.

▼ **GALHA** membership is open to all lesbians and gay men who broadly subscribe to the Humanist outlook and are concerned about gay and lesbian rights. It is also open to any Humanist wishing to offer support.

▼ In addition to giving members the opportunity to take part in its various activities and meet people of like mind, **GALHA** keeps them in touch by issuing a free quarterly mini magazine, with news, articles, and reviews, and offers a correspondence/hospitality service, as well as a selection of books by mail order.

# JOIN GALHA TO HELP PROMOTE RATIONAL CARING HUMANIST VALUES AND GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TO: The Secretary, GALHA, 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2HB:

▽I support the aims of the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association and apply for membership.

▽I enclose my annual subscription of

☐ **£7.00 (waged)** ☐ **£3.50 (unwaged, student, OAP)**

☐ **£8.00 (international, plus £5.00 for airmail if required)**

*These are the minimum rates and a donation, however small, would be much appreciated. Please make cheque/postal order payable to GALHA.*

NAME (block capitals)

ADDRESS (block capitals)

TELEPHONE (if any)

SIGNATURE